

ICELAND BATTLE ON ICELANDERS

THE country of Iceland started a legal fight against Iceland the supermarket yesterday over the use of the name.

The island's government claims the British retailer has "aggressively" pursued cases against firms there which tried to use Iceland in their names.

It is challenging Iceland Foods' exclusive ownership of the trademark across Europe, saying it is preventing the country's companies promoting their goods and services abroad.

The country has lodged a complaint at the European Union Intellectual Property Office. It says the trademark is "exceptionally broad and Trademark . . . store chain preferred approach".



By RHODRI PHILLIPS, Business Editor

ambiguous in definition, often rendering the country's firms unable to describe their products as Icelandic".

And it claims it has made many efforts to negotiate with the supermarket chain but was hit with "unrealistic and unacceptable" demands, leaving it with no other option.

The prospect of a lawsuit was first raised in September but it has now become active.

Iceland Foods said last night the Icelandic government had not directly approached it "to achieve an amicable resolution of this issue, which would be our preferred approach".

Maggie's refurb 'no'

MARGARET Thatcher ignored repeated pleas by her then-Chancellor Geoffrey Howe to approve a kitchen refurb at No11.

The PM was reluctant to rubber-stamp the £4,150 work at a time of big cuts in late 1979, newly released files show.

Three follow-up calls were ignored. An official later replied that Maggie was "keeping in mind how sensitive expenditure of this kind can be".

FISHING LINE

Cocaine worth more than £50million was seized from a tinned tuna shipment in Thurrock, Essex.

AUTUMN

NICOLA Sturgeon yesterday accused the Tories of masterminding a "Brexit con" as experts warned workers face a grim decade of lost earnings.

The First Minister blasted Philip Hammond's bleak economic forecasts and insisted his mini-Budget had revealed the "true cost" of the UK's vote to leave Europe.

She claimed his failure to deliver Leave campaigners' pledge of a £350million-a-week NHS boost proved it was a false promise all along.

And she again hinted independence might be the only way for Scotland to escape the impact of quitting the EU amid fears pay will be stuck in a rut for the longest time since World War Two.

Ms Sturgeon told First Minister's Questions at Holyrood: "We started to see perhaps for the first time laid bare the true cost of Brexit. Rather than there being the promise of £350million extra a week for the National Health Service, what we saw yesterday is that the additional borrowing, just the additional borrowing, caused by Brexit will amount to £225million a week.

"That's the Brexit con that so many people in the Conservative party have presided over.

"That's why I'm so determined that we continue to explore every option, to protect Scotland's interests and in particular to protect our place in the single market.

"Because that's how we minimise the costs of Brexit that are being imposed on us by the Conservative party."

Her blast came as economists continued to draw dire conclusions over the Chancellor's Autumn Statement yesterday.

Though wages will still continue to creep up slightly ahead of inflation in the next five years, they will be 3.7 per cent lower in real terms than had been predicted in March.

Think tank the Resolution Foundation said average earnings will grow by a paltry 1.6 per cent from 2010 to 2020.

That compares with a 12.7 per cent hike in the 2000s, and rises of more than 20 per cent in every other decade since the 1920s.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies found the lowest earning 30 per cent of society will be hit the hardest.

Its boss Paul Johnson said: "One cannot stress enough how dreadful that is – more than a decade without real earnings growth. We have not seen a period remotely like it in the last 70 years."

He said OBR forecasts of a £122billion increase in borrowing over five years – almost half due to Brexit – were "more upbeat" than others, including the Bank of England's analysis.

As we told yesterday, the figures show Mr Hammond has abandoned predecessor George Osborne's key election pledge to eliminate the deficit by 2020.

Spending increases including £820million for Scotland mean national debt is set to spiral to £2trillion in the next five years.

Speaking during a visit to Gloucestershire with Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday, Mr Hammond said debt was "not out of control" but admitted it was "larger than we would like it to be".

Defending his economic plans, he insisted: "It makes sense, given the warning signals from the OBR report, to keep a little bit of fire-

By CHRIS MUSSON and ANDREW NICOLL

power in the locker, to build a little bit of a reserve so that, if there is a slowdown next year, we've got enough capacity to support the economy, to protect jobs, to ensure that the economy can get through any headwinds it encounters.

"The OBR itself would say that there is a wide range of uncertainty around its central forecast.

"It isn't only the uncertainty around Brexit negotiations. There are many factors which are causing uncertainty in economic forecasting."

Ms Sturgeon has accused Mr Hammond of sleight of hand over the £820million capital spending boost in Scotland, as a result of his uplift for infrastructure projects south of the border.

Holyrood figures showed that despite the Chancellor's sweetener, the grant would still be 8.2 per cent lower in 2020 than it was in 2010 after inflation.

The bigger pot for day-to-day spending is also on course to fall by £1.5billion in real terms between 2016 and 2021 thanks to austerity measures announced a year ago by Mr Osborne – unless Nats choose to hike taxes.

The suspicions were backed up yesterday by experts.

The Scottish Parliament independent research centre calculated day-to-day spending would face a cut of just over three per cent, from £26billion to £25.2billion by 2020.

Ms Sturgeon welcomed the "small increase in capital investment", but stressed by 2020 the capital budget would be around eight per cent lower in real terms than when the Tories took office.

Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser praised the Chancellor's £820million boost as well as £3.3million for Scottish charities, the City Deal funding schemes for Scotland and a freeze in fuel duty.

He said: "Why can't the First Minister stop being so miserable and just welcome this good news?"

Greens co-convenor Patrick Harvie said the Autumn Statement contained a "great deal more good news for the wealthiest", and called for the Scottish Budget to include "progressive" tax policies and to go further on the living wage, energy efficiency and topping up benefits.

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1.6% projected growth in average earnings from 2010 to 2020

12.7% increase in average earnings between 2000 and 2010

BUDGET: THE AFTERMATH

PATH OF EARNINGS (REAL TERMS SINCE 2008)



Debts 'in control' . . . Mr Hammond yesterday with PM Mrs May

Sturgeon blasts Tory 'Brexit con' ..as workers face 10yr pay squeeze

Borrowing fears . . . Ms Sturgeon at Holyrood



Meeting . . . Matheson

Ministers lay down law fears

By CHRIS MUSSON

THE Justice Secretary met anxious law enforcement chiefs to discuss how Brexit will affect the legal system.

Cops, prosecutors and prison bosses joined Michael Matheson and Brexit minister Mike Russell to assess the impact of leaving the EU.

Mr Matheson said: "The uncertainties Brexit poses for Scotland from a justice and legal perspective are substantial.

"What was clear is the widespread concern from throughout the sector."



Delay . . . McCormick

Indyref2 6-month stall bid

ELECTION watchdogs called for rules that would prevent a snap indy vote before the tail end of 2017.

The Electoral Commission wants the vote to be at least six months after legislation's been passed.

The advice is intended to allow "sufficient time" for campaigners, electoral staff and the watchdog to prepare themselves.

Electoral Commissioner John McCormick said: "We have highlighted improvements."

The government's consultation on rules for a second independence referendum doesn't finish until mid-January.

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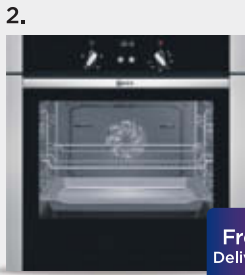


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